



Monthly Update from the Alaska State Ombudsman

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2016 Annual Report

The 2016 Annual Report is now available! Highlights include:

- ♦ We received 2,664 contacts last year. Of these, 30% were people contacting us about non-jurisdictional problems or were information and referral calls.
- ♦ There were 1,883 jurisdictional complaints. Most of these complaints were about the Department of Corrections (36%), followed by the Department of Health & Social Services (26%), and the Department of Administration (11%).
- ♦ There were 435 investigations in 2016. Most (82%) were resolved with brief review and assistance.
- ♦ A completed investigation into the management of the background check program used by DHSS to screen private sector employees in a variety of organizations serving children, elders, and other vulnerable populations. Investigation found multiple issues with the program, and the Ombudsman made 12 recommendations for improvement. Read the report [here](#).
- ♦ A person experiencing disabilities was initially referred to the Office of Public Advocacy's grievance procedure to resolve a complaint about accessing their money to buy clothes. However, the complainant returned to the Ombudsman for help when they couldn't navigate the grievance procedure unassisted. The ombudsman investigator worked with an OPA supervisor to resolve the complaint by having funds released to the complainant.
- ♦ Due to delays by DOC in sending child support payments from inmates' wages to the Child Support Services Division (CSSD), some inmates were being charged interest for late payments. The ombudsman investigator determined the cause of the problem and informed both state agencies of the serious consequences to inmates. Leadership of DOC and CSSD worked together to find a solution, which included DOC auditing all inmate offender trust accounts and paying CSSD \$9,442 to bring accounts current and compensate inmates for interest charged to them for late payments.

Read the [2016 Annual Report](#).

Problem Solved! Highlighting Solution-Focused Efforts at Anchorage Correctional Complex

Beginning in 2013, we began to receive many complaints about how inmates' time in prison was calculated (time accounting), particularly at Anchorage Correctional Complex (ACC). Our investigators would review each complaint, and work with Department of Corrections staff to make any necessary corrections. We also had a staff member attend DOC's time accounting training to improve our ability to address these complaints.

In 2016, the ACC Records Office staff found ways to eliminate redundant processes, better track paperwork coming from the courts, and allow for review of release paperwork late on Fridays so that inmates eligible for release don't have to wait until Monday. The impact of these process improvements is significant. Before those changes, the ombudsman received 7-8 time accounting complaints about ACC each month. Since November 2016, we have received an average of 2 complaints per month. That's an annual reduction of about 72 complaints — or **75% of complaints avoided after the process improvements**.

What's Ahead

Watch for our updated website later this Fall and look for us at Alaska Federation of Natives in October. Outreach is planned for Fairbanks October 22-25.

Have ideas for how we can better engage with Alaskans? Email them to us at Ombudsman@akleg.gov.

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